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INFO RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 8885  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ APR 8608  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 4942  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 5575

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 002437

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: CHARGE URGES GOC TO STRENGTHEN PROTECTION PROGRAMS

REF: A. BOGOTA 2392

[1](#)B. BOGOTA 923

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer  
Reason: 1.4 (b,d)

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Summary  
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[1](#)1. (C) The Charge reiterated to Vice President Francisco Santos and Justice and Interior Minister Carlos Holguin the importance of strengthening GOC protection programs for victims participating in the Justice and Peace Law process. Santos and Holguin said the GOC shared our concerns and was taking steps to make the programs more effective. End summary.

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Charge Urges Stronger Protection Programs  
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[1](#)2. (C) The Charge met with Justice and Interior Minister Carlos Holguin on April 10 to stress the need for better GOC protection of victims participating in the Justice and Peace Law process. He urged the GOC to ensure its protection programs were better integrated, including greater dissemination of threat information within the GOC, and encouraged the GOC to consult widely with victims and human groups on this issue.

[1](#)3. (C) The Charge made the same points to Vice President Francisco Santos on March 27, emphasizing the case of murdered victims' rights advocate Yolando Izquierdo (ref B) demonstrated that local Colombian National Police (CNP) forces should be immediate "first responders" to assist threatened individuals. It was essential to establish accountability early so that other cases do not fall through the cracks, as various GOC entities looked at a case to see if it fit the criteria of their specific program. The CNP responsibility need not necessarily be permanent, but at least it should protect a person in initial stages of a threat situation until the GOC program allocated permanent responsibility. The Charge also briefed the VP on USG programs, including a new effort to digitize victim testimony and make it searchable, enabling investigators and prosecutors to prepare comprehensive cases. He offered the USG's continuing assistance to the Vice President and Minister Holguin.

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GOC Commits to Stronger Programs  
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[1](#)4. (C) Santos and Holguin said the GOC shared our concerns

and has taken steps to improve its protection programs. Holguin, who was accompanied by vice ministers Reyes and Nieto, said in the short-term the GOC has instructed departmental police commanders to serve as "first-responders" when threats are made against victims. The GOC has also identified 30 high-risk victims advocates, including 10 from Cordoba Department where Yolanda Izquiero was murdered, and is providing them with permanent protection. In the medium-term, Holguin said the GOC is working on a map of high-risk areas, as well as protocols to improve the overall GOC response and eliminate bureaucratic gaps. Vice President Santos said his human rights chief Carlos Franco would report to the Embassy shortly on progress with the protocol.

15. (C) Holguin told the Charge the GOC understands the protection program for victims cannot be the same as that for other witnesses, and wants to design a flexible approach that provides maximum coverage. Still, Holguin cautioned that with 40,000 or more victims, the GOC cannot provide bodyguards to all those who need it. GOC assistance will focus on providing increased police presence, as well as communication and other assistance, to leaders in the victims movement and to other high-profile individuals. These efforts will be complemented by an increased Department of Administrative Security (DAS) and CNP effort to investigate and thwart threats against victims. Vice FM Reyes said a GOC Operational Committee -- consisting of representatives of the DAS, CNP, Prosecutor General's Office (Fiscalia), Inspector General's Office (Procuraduria), National Reparations and Reconciliation Committee, Armed Forces and Ombudsman's Office (Defensoria) -- meets weekly to evaluate threat information and approve specific protection measures.

Drucker